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(54) System for arrayed radiation detectors for imaging.

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(73) Proprietor : SHIMADZU CORPORATION
1 Kuwabara-cho Nishinokyo Nakakyō-ku
Kyoto 604 (JP)

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(72) Inventor : Adachi, Susumu
Shimadzuchuneiryō 18
Shunei-cho Sainin Ukyo-ku Kyoto 615 (JP)
Inventor : Kamegawa, Masayuki
28-24 Sannomiya-cho
Kamikatsura Nishigyo-ku Kyoto 615 (JP)

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(74) Representative : Smith, Philip Antony et al
REDDIE & GROSE 16 Theobalds Road
London WC1X 8PL (GB)

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Description

Background of the Invention

The present invention relates to a radiation image detecting system with the radiation image receiving plane constituted of two-dimensionally arrayed radiation sensors as pixels, and more particularly to such a system improved in its signal-to-noise ratio.

A typical example of the arrayed-sensor type radiation image detecting system as described e. g. in EP-A-0 167 119, has its image receiving plant constituted, as is shown in Fig. 4, with a plurality of highly sensitive radiation sensors D_{ij} ($i = 1, 2, \dots, m$; $j = 1, 2, \dots, n$) with a radiation receiving area smaller than one square millimeter. Many such small sensors D_{ij} are densely arranged to as to form a (m, n) sensor matrix having a necessary total area, for example, of about 30 cm square. Each of the sensors is made of a flat semiconductor piece plated on both surfaces with metallic layers as electrodes. The semiconductor piece is of a compound semiconductor such as CdTe, HgI₂ or the like. With a bias voltage kept supplied to the sensor through the electrodes, a radiation photon incident to the semiconductor part produces electric charges therein and makes the sensor output between the electrodes a charge pulse signal having an intensity proportional to the energy of the photon. According to Fig. 4, all of the upper-side electrodes of n radiation sensors aligned on each of m rows of the (m, n) sensor matrix are commonly connected and led to corresponding one of m row-side amplifiers A_i , while all of the lower-side electrodes of m radiation sensors aligned on each of n columns of the (m, n) sensor matrix are commonly connected and led to corresponding one of n column-side amplifiers B_j through corresponding one of capacitors C_j . The capacitors C_j are to protect the amplifiers B_j from a bias voltage V_b supplied to the radiation sensors from the lower side. With the amplifiers thus provided, a radiation photon incident to a particular radiation sensor D_{ij} causes a row-side amplifier A_i and a column-side amplifier to output their respective output pulse signals. In other words, a combination of outputs from two particular amplifiers A_i and B_j determines the radiation sensor irradiated by a radiation photon. However, when two or more photons coincidentally irradiate one sensor of different sensors $D_{ij}, D_{ij'}, D_{ij''}, \dots$ ($i, i' = 1, 2, \dots, m$; $j, j' = 1, 2, \dots, n$) whose outputs are to be inputted to a common row-side amplifier A_i ($i = 1, 2, \dots, m$), namely, when both or either of the amplifiers A_i, B_j outputs a signal larger than that corresponding to one photon, the coincidently irradiated different sensors can not be distinguished from each other or one another. In such a case, therefore, the outputs from the amplifiers A_i and B_j are to be ignored and not employed as pixel signals. Further, since the height of the output pulse signals from the amplifiers A_i and B_j proportional to the energy of the photon which

irradiates the sensor corresponding to the amplifiers, it also is possible, according to this type radiation image detecting system, to selectively obtain a specific radiation image due to a radiation having a particular wave length by discriminating the output signals of the amplifiers with respect to their pulse height.

In the above radiation image receiving system, each of the amplifiers has its input stage constituted with a charge amplification type pre-amplifier making use of a field effect transistor. The output noise power of a charge amplification type amplifier is known to increase in proportion to the square value C^2 of the input-side capacitance C of the amplifier. In general the noise predominates in the output with $C \geq 10 \text{ pF}$.

Since the capacitance C may well be considered equal to the output-side capacitance of the signal source to the amplifier, and each of the amplifiers A_i, B_j in the present case has its input connected with n or m radiation sensors in parallel, the input-side capacitances of A_i and B_j are respectively nC_d and mC_d , where C_d is the capacitance concerned with one radiation sensor D_{ij} (and its wiring). Accordingly, the noise powers inputted to the row-side and the column-side amplifiers A_i and B_j are $(nC_d)^2$ and $(mC_d)^2$, respectively. This means that the noise of the system increases in proportion to the square of the number of radiation sensors constituting pixels, causing the signal-to-noise ratio (in voltage or current) to increase in proportion to the number of the sensors concerned. In addition, the long wirings from the sensors to the amplifiers, which have high input impedance, also cause the amplifiers to be liable to pick up external noises.

35 Objects and Summary of the Invention

The present invention aims at eliminating such disadvantages accompanying the conventional arrayed-sensor type radiation image detecting system, and makes it an object to provide a new arrayed-sensor type radiation image detecting system improved so that the deterioration in signal-to-noise ratio may be suppressed to be proportional to the square root of the number, not linearly to the number, of radiation sensors constituting a radiation image receiving plane.

Another object of the present invention is to keep such an improved radiation image detecting system free from a possible sensitivity decrease due to the measures for improving the signal-to-noise ratio.

To achieve the above objects, according to the present invention, the radiation sensors are accompanied by their respective output buffer circuits through which the output signals from the sensors are inputted to corresponding row-side and column-side amplifiers. Each of the buffer circuits is preferably made up of a field effect transistor (FET) whose gate and drain are connected respectively to the output of

the radiation sensor and to the input of the corresponding amplifier. Such buffer circuits provided to all of the radiation sensors have an effect to isolate the output-side capacitances of the radiation sensors from the input stage of the amplifiers, making the input-side parallel capacitance of the amplifiers free from the influence of the output-side capacitances of the radiation sensors. Accordingly, the noise power at the output stage of each of the amplifiers decreases linearly depending on a single-sensor output-side capacitance C_d squared (C_d^2) and multiplied by the number of the radiation sensors whose output signals commonly inputted to that amplifier. The above number of the radiation sensors is n for the amplifier being one of the m row-side amplifiers, and m for the amplifier being one of n column-side amplifiers, provided that the radiation sensors constitute a (m, n) sensor matrix. However, the output signal from the sensor must be branched both to a row-side amplifier and to a column-side amplifier, resulting in a decrease in the output of the buffer circuit to $1/2$. Such an sensitivity decrease is overcome, according to preferred embodiment of the present invention, by incorporating to the buffer circuit a current mirror-circuit having two output terminals : one is for the row-side amplifier and the other for the column-side amplifier.

In any event the present invention improves the noise powers of the accompanying row-side and column-side amplifiers respectively to nC_d^2 and mC_d^2 , which are reduced respectively to $1/n$ and $1/m$ of the noise powers $(nC_d)^2$ and $(mC_d)^2$ expected in case of the conventional system as shown in Fig. 4.

Brief Description of the Drawings

In the following the present invention is described in further detail on reference to the accompanying drawings in which :

Fig. 1(a) shows a semi-blockdiagrammatical entire circuit constitution in an embodiment of the present invention ;

Fig. 1(b), which is a partial detail of Fig. 1(a), shows the buffer circuit accompanying each of the radiaiton sensors in the above embodiment together with the connecting relation to a row-side and a column-side amplifiers ;

Fig. 2 shows a perspective dismantled view of the above embodiment ;

Fig. 3(a) shows a modified buffer circuit to be used in the above embodiment ;

Fig. 3(b) shows a further modified buffer circuit to be used in the above embodiment ; and

Fig. 4 shows a perspective view of a conventional arrayed-sensor type radiation image detecting system.

Detailed Description of the Invention

Referring to Fig. 2, which schematically shows a perspective dismantled view of an embodiment of the present invention, a (m, n) radiation sensor matrix 10 is constituted with a semiconductor plate 1 plated on the lower face with a common electrode 2 and on the upper face with a plurality of sensor electrodes E_{ij} ($i = 1, 2, \dots, m$; $j = 1, 2, \dots, n$) arranged so as to form a (m, n) electrode matrix. Each of the sensor electrodes E_{ij} , the semiconductor plate 1 and the common electrode 2 form each of all the individual radiation sensors contained in the (m, n) radiation sensor matrix 10. The radiation sensors, which can not be shown positively in Fig. 2, are given a reference sign S_{ij} and represented with diode symbols in the following drawings Figs. 1(a), 1(b), 3(a) and 3(b) illustrating the circuit constitutions of this and other embodiments, firstly because there is no suitable symbol for a radiation sensor, and secondly because there may occasionally be formed a diode between the semiconductor plate 1 and each of the sensor electrodes E_{ij} according to the metallic substance used for the sensor electrodes. It should be noticed, however, that the formation of diodes between the semiconductor and the electrodes is not an essential matter to the function of radiation sensing. It is to be emphasized that the use of diode symbols for the radiation sensors S_{ij} is only for convenience. With the description returned to the constitution of the embodiment, the electrodes E_{ij} defining the individual radiation sensors S_{ij} on the semiconductor plate 1 has a dimension smaller than 1 mm^2 to comply with a high resolving power required to the radiation image to be detected, while the semiconductor plate 1 usually has a large area reaching 1000 cm^2 in accordance with the dimension of an object whose image is to be detected. The semiconductor plate having such a large area can easily effected also by joining together a plurality of semiconductor plates with a smaller area. This sensor matrix is accompanied by a circuit board 11 carrying thereon $m \times n$ buffer circuits C_{ij} (not shown in Fig. 2 ; described later with Figs. 1(a) and 1(b)), each of which interposes between each of the radiation sensors S_{ij} (hidden under the electrodes E_{ij}) and each of m row-side amplifiers A_i and of n column-side amplifiers B_j .

With the outward appearance as described above, this embodiment has its electronics composed of the above mentioned buffer circuits C_{ij} and amplifiers A_i, B_j . As is shown in Fig. 1(a) illustrating the entire circuit constitution of the embodiment, the buffer circuits C_{ij} are provided in correspondence one-to-one with the radiation sensors S_{ij} represented by diode symbols, and their outputs grouped with respect to the rows and columns of the sensor matrix and then inputted to their respective corresponding row-side and column-side amplifiers A_i and B_j . The details of the buffer circuits are illustrated in Fig. 1(b) with a

representative circuit C_{ij} exemplified. In Figs. 1(a) and 1(b), each of the sensors S_{ij} (as considered diodes) is inversely biased through a resistor 4, two branching resistors 5 and 6, and load resistor 7 and 8 of the corresponding row-side and column-side amplifiers A_i and B_j , so that the potential at the cathode of the sensor S_{ij} (as a diode) may be kept substantially at zero volt. With the sensor S_{ij} so biased, a current which flows in the sensor S_{ij} in the inverse direction when irradiated with radiation passes through the above resistors 5 and 6 (feedback resistors), causing the amplifier A_i and B_j output their respective pulse signals corresponding to a pixel signal from the sensor S_{ij} .

In the above process of radiation signal detection, all the row-side and column-side amplifiers A_i and B_j are isolated from the sensor S_{ij} by their respective buffer circuits C_{ij} . Accordingly, each of the row-side and column-side amplifiers A_i and B_j has its output noise power made dependent on C_d^2 multiplied by m or n (C_d : the capacitance of one diode), not dependent on $(mC_d)^2$ or $(nC_d)^2$. Thus the signal-to-noise ratio of the radiation image detecting system is largely increased by the present invention.

In the above embodiment, however, since the signal current through the sensor S_{ij} is branched into the two resistors 5 and 6, the output signals from the row-side and column-side amplifiers A_i and B_j reduce by half. To avoid such sensitivity decrease, the present invention can be embodied by modifying each of the above buffer circuit C_{ij} to a circuit L_{ij} as shown in Fig. 3(a). This buffer circuit includes a current mirror-circuit 9 having two output terminals respectively for the row-side amplifier A_i and the column-side amplifier B_j . This current mirror circuit is, in fact, a current amplifier preventing the sensor output from being decreased to 1/2 owing to branching into two row-side and column-side amplifiers A_i , B_j .

Such a buffer circuit having a current mirror-circuit can be further modified as shown in Fig. 3(b), in which the modified buffer circuit and the current mirror-circuit contained therein are reference-signed with M_{ij} and $9a$ respectively.

Claims

1. A radiation image detecting system whose radiation image receiving plane consists of a plurality of radiation sensors (S_{11}, \dots, S_{mn}) arrayed so as to form a two-dimensional (m, n)-sensor matrix, said radiation image detecting system comprising :

buffer circuits (C_{11}, \dots, C_{mn}) through which radiation signals detected by said radiation sensors (S_{11}, \dots, S_{mn}) are output, said buffer circuits (C_{11}, \dots, C_{mn}) being provided in one-to-one correspondence with said radiation sensors (S_{11}, \dots, S_{mn}) ;

m row-side amplifiers (A_1, \dots, A_m), each of which amplifies radiation signals detected by the radiation sensors belonging to each of n rows of said (m, n)-sensor matrix ; and

5 n column-side amplifiers (B_1, \dots, B_n), each of which amplifies radiation signals detected by the radiation sensors arrayed in each of n columns of said (m, n)-sensor matrix, the buffer circuits isolating the output side capacitances of the sensors from the input stage of the amplifiers.

10 2. A radiation image detecting system defined in Claim 1, wherein each of said buffer circuits (C_{11}, \dots, C_{mn}) comprises two field effect transistors with their gates commonly connected to accept radiation signals detected by one of said radiation sensors and with their respective drains inputted to one of said row-side amplifiers and to one of said column-side amplifiers, respectively.

15 3. A radiation image detecting system defined in Claim 1, wherein each of said buffer circuits (C_{11}, \dots, C_{mn}) consists of a field effect transistor with its gate connected to one of said radiation detectors to accept radiation signals detected by the same and with its channel circuit accompanied by a current mirror-circuit (9, 9a) having two output terminals for transmitting said radiation signals to one of said row-side amplifiers and to one of said column side amplifiers, respectively.

30 Ansprüche

1. Strahlungsdarstellungsdetektorvorrichtung, deren Strahlungsdarstellungs-Empfangsebene aus einer Vielzahl von Strahlungssensoren (S_{11}, \dots, S_{mn}) besteht, die so angeordnet sind, daß sie eine zweidimensionale (m, n)-Sensormatrix bilden, wobei die genannte Strahlungsdarstellungsdetektorvorrichtung umfaßt :

35 40 Pufferschaltungen (C_{11}, \dots, C_{mn}), durch welche von den genannten Strahlungssensoren (S_{11}, \dots, S_{mn}) erfaßte Strahlungssignale ausgegeben werden, wobei die genannten Pufferschaltungen (C_{11}, \dots, C_{mn}) im Verhältnis von eins zu eins zu den genannten Strahlungssensoren (S_{11}, \dots, S_{mn}) vorgesehen sind ;

45 50 m zeilenseitige Verstärker (A_1, \dots, A_m), die jeweils Strahlungssignale verstärken, die durch die zu jeder von n Zeilen der genannten (m, n)-Sensormatrix gehörigen Strahlungssensoren erfaßt werden ; und

55 55 n spaltenseitige Verstärker (B_1, \dots, B_n), die jeweils Strahlungssignale verstärken, die durch die in jeder von n Spalten der genannten (m, n)-Sensormatrix angeordneten Strahlungssensoren erfaßt werden, wobei die Pufferschaltungen die ausgangsseitigen Kapazitäten der Sensoren gegenüber der Eingangsstufe der Verstärker isolieren.

2. Strahlungsdarstellungsdetektorvorrichtung nach Anspruch 1, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß zu jeder der genannten Pufferschaltungen (C_{11}, \dots, C_{mn}) zwei Feldeffekttransistoren gehören, deren Gatter gemeinsam geschaltet sind, um durch einen der genannten Strahlungssensoren erfaßte Strahlungssignale zu empfangen, und deren jeweilige Drains einem der genannten zeilenseitigen Verstärker bzw. einem der genannten spaltenseitigen Verstärker eingegeben werden.

3. Strahlungsdarstellungsdetektorvorrichtung nach Anspruch 1, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß jede der genannten Pufferschaltungen (C_{11}, \dots, C_{mn}) aus einem Feldeffekttransistor besteht, dessen Gatter mit einem der genannten Strahlungsdetektoren verbunden ist, um die durch denselben erfaßten Strahlungssignale zu empfangen, und zu dessen Kanalschaltung eine Stromspiegelschaltung (9, 9a) gehört.

3. Un système de détection d'image de rayonnement conforme à la revendication 1, dans lequel chacun desdits circuits tampons (C_{11}, \dots, C_{mn}) consiste en un transistor à effet de champ à grille connectée à l'un desdits détecteurs de rayonnement pour recevoir des signaux de rayonnement captés par ce détecteur, le circuit de canal de ce transistor étant associé à un circuit en miroir de courant (9, 9a) présentant deux bornes de sortie pour transmettre lesdits signaux de rayonnement à l'un desdits amplificateurs latéraux de rangée et à l'un desdits amplificateurs latéraux de colonne, respectivement.

5 desdits détecteurs de rayonnement pour recevoir des signaux de rayonnement captés par ce détecteur, le circuit de canal de ce transistor étant associé à un circuit en miroir de courant (9, 9a) présentant deux bornes de sortie pour transmettre lesdits signaux de rayonnement à l'un desdits amplificateurs latéraux de rangée et à l'un desdits amplificateurs latéraux de colonne, respectivement.

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Revendications

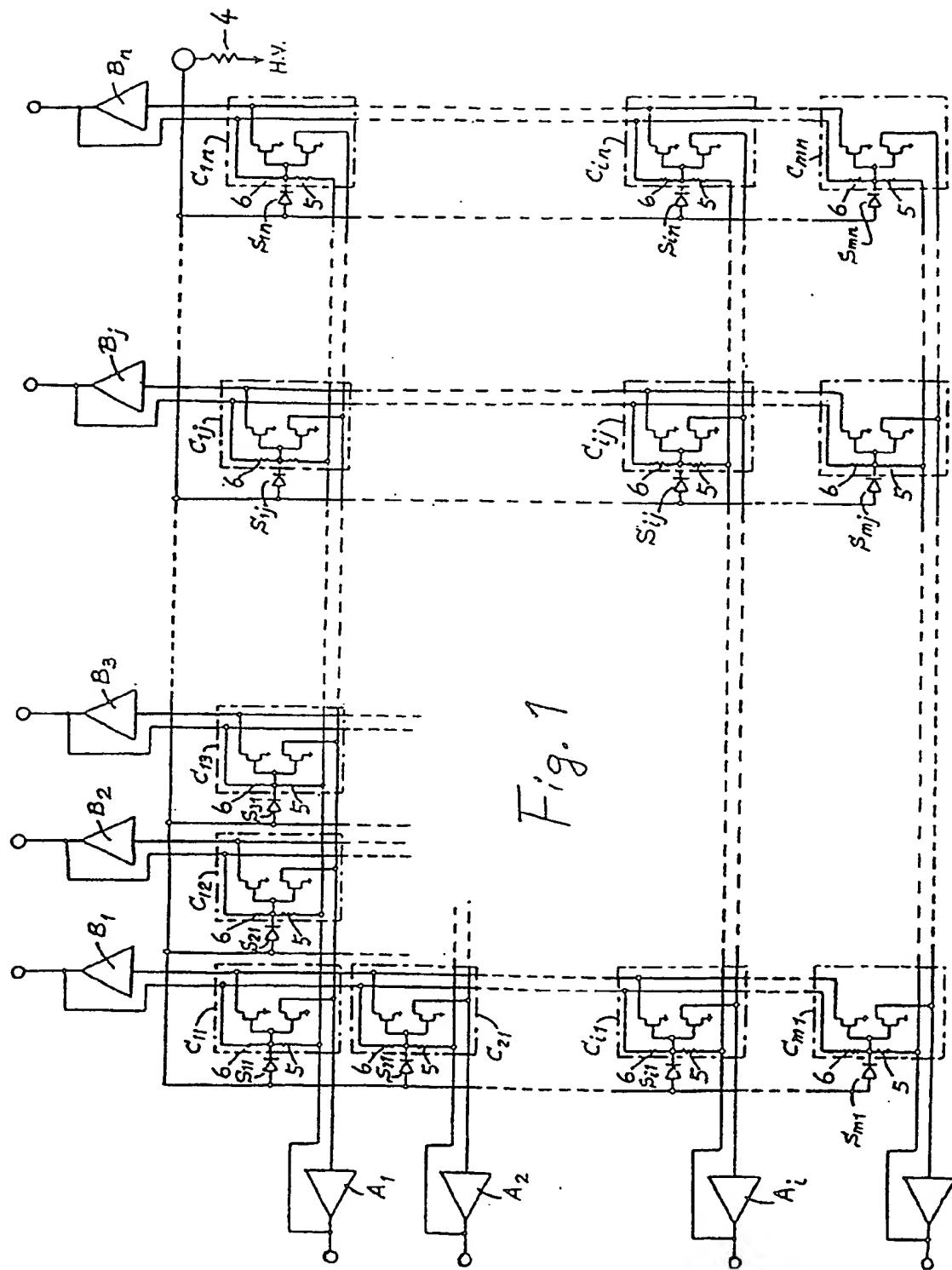
1. Un système de détection d'image de rayonnement dans lequel le plan de réception d'image de rayonnement est constitué d'une pluralité de détecteurs de rayonnement ($S_{11}, \dots, S_{m,n}$) distribués de manière à former une matrice bidimensionnelle (m, n) de détecteurs, ce système de détection d'image de rayonnement comprenant :

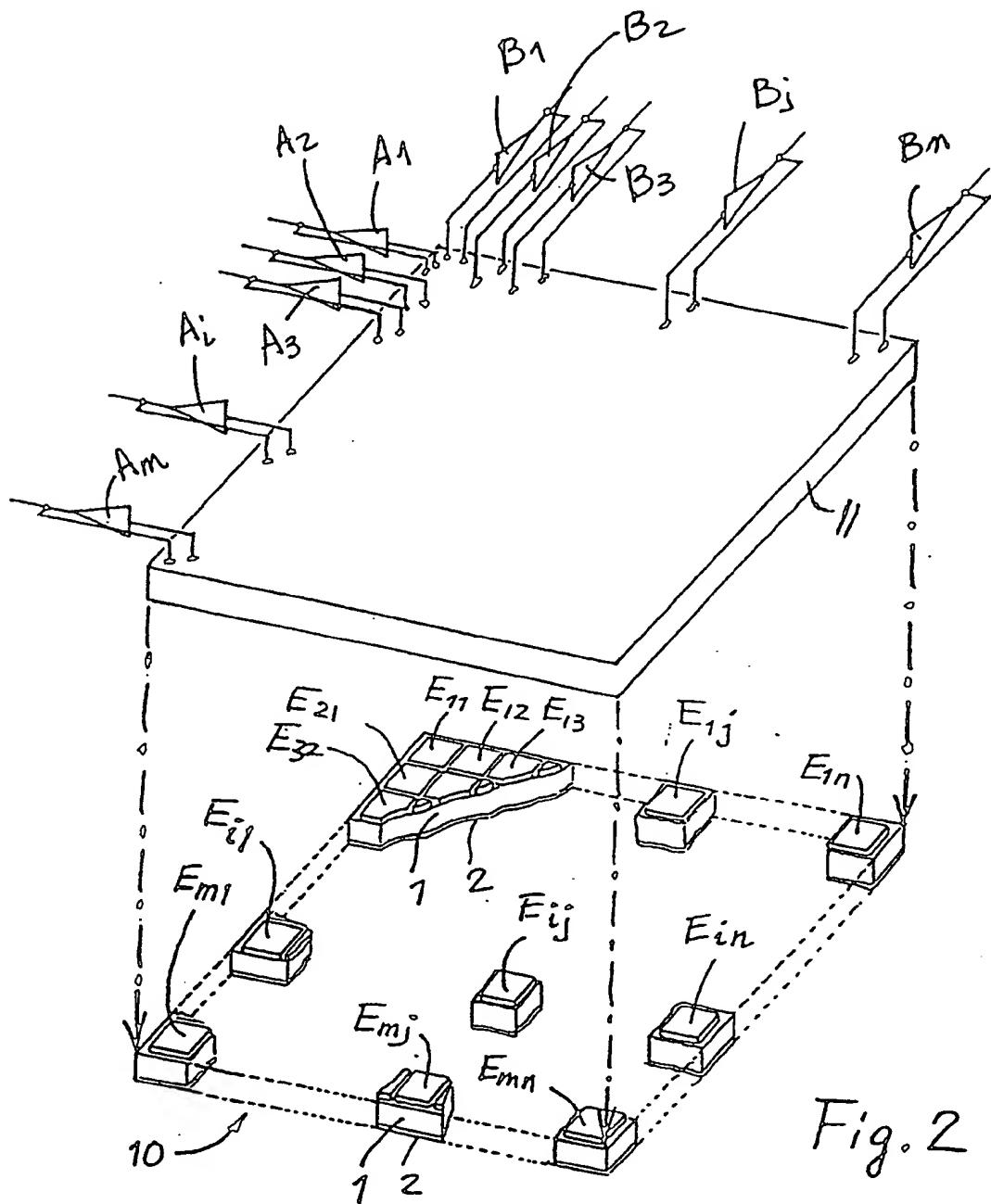
des circuits tampons (C_{11}, \dots, C_{mn}) à travers lesquels sortent les signaux de rayonnement captés par lesdits détecteurs de rayonnement, lesdits circuits tampons étant prévus en correspondance biunivoque avec lesdits détecteurs de rayonnement (S_{11}, \dots, S_{mn}) ;

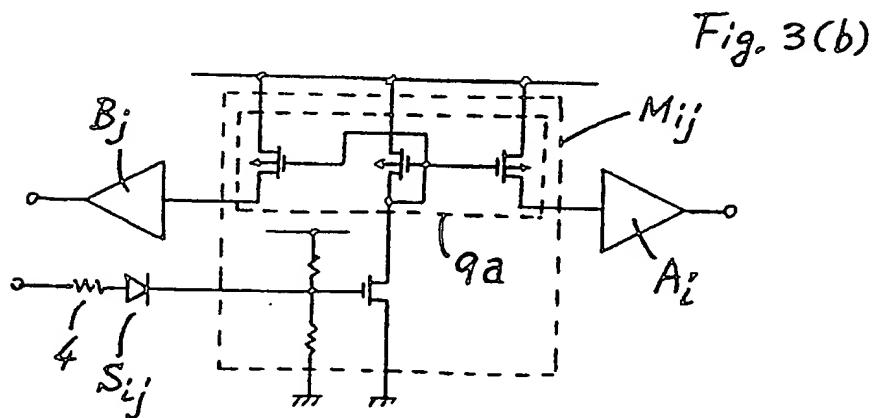
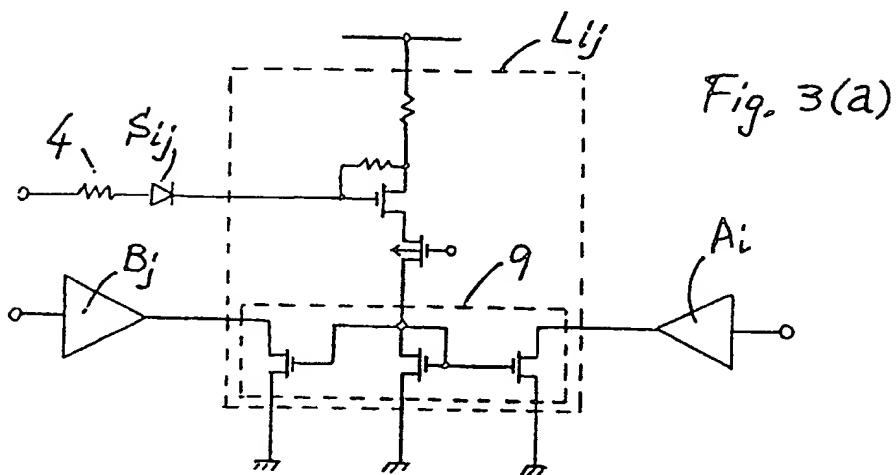
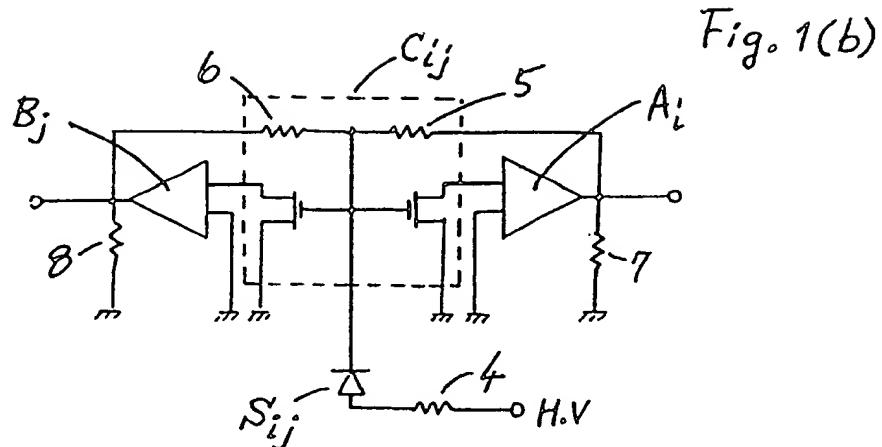
m amplificateurs (A_1, \dots, A_m) latéraux de rangée, amplifiant chacun des signaux de rayonnement captés par les détecteurs de rayonnement appartenant à chacune des m rangées de ladite matrice (m, n) de détecteurs ; et

m amplificateurs (B_1, \dots, B_n) latéraux de colonne, amplifiant chacun les signaux de rayonnement captés par les détecteurs de rayonnement disposés dans chacune des m colonnes de ladite matrice (m, n) de détecteurs, les circuits tampons isolant les capacités de sortie des détecteurs de l'étage d'entrée des amplificateurs.

2. Un système de détection d'image de rayonnement conforme à la revendication 1, dans lequel chacun desdits circuits tampons (C_{11}, \dots, C_{mn}) comprend deux transistors à effet de champ à grilles interconnectées pour recevoir les signaux de rayonnement captés par l'un desdits détecteurs de rayonnement, les drains respectifs de ces transistors constituant les entrées de l'un des amplificateurs latéraux de rangée et de l'un des amplificateurs latéraux de colonne, respectivement.







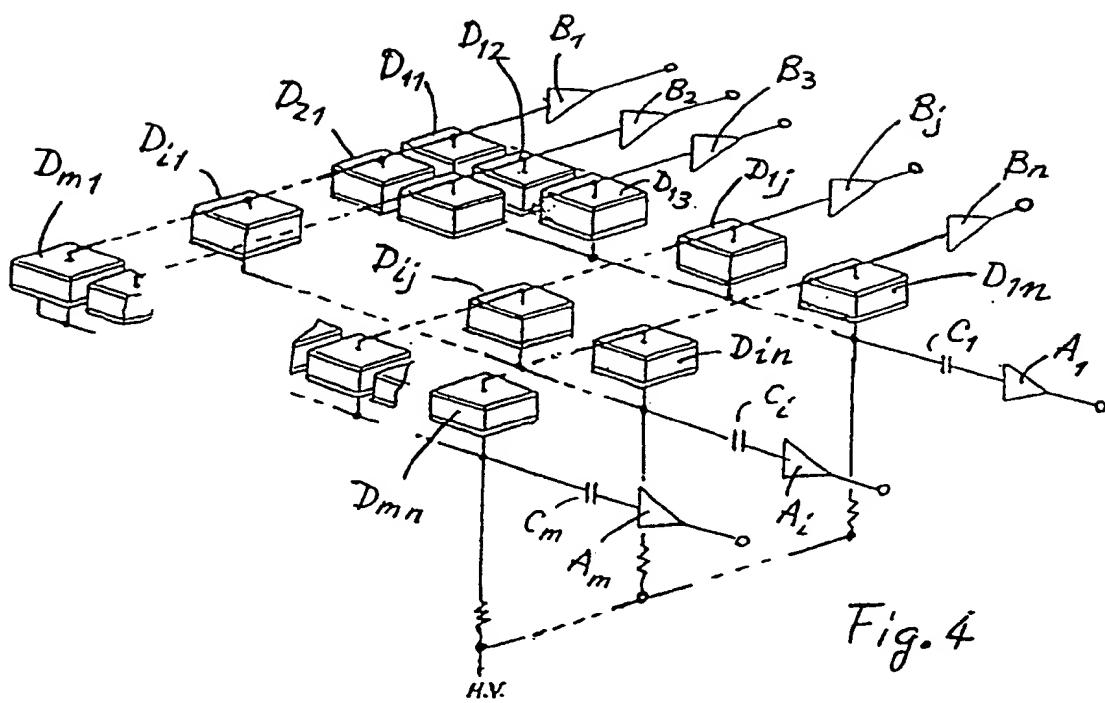


Fig. 4